

Appl. No. 09/914,526
Atty. Docket No. 7472
Amdt. dated 6/28/2005
Reply to Office Action of 4/8/2005
Customer No. 27752

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 4-6 and 12, 13 and 15 are now in the case.

Claims 1, 4-6, 12 and 13 have been re-cast as process, rather than product, claims in order to focus on the inventive aspects of the disclosed technology with greater particularity, thereby advancing prosecution.

Process Claim1 now recites the applying of the non-silicate (basis page 7, line 30) carbonate/sulfate (basis Claim 3) material in aqueous or slurry form, and drying same to form the desired coating. Basis for this processing recitation is at page 9, lines 18 and 29 and in the working Examples, e.g., page 15, lines 1-8. The remaining claims are similarly presented as process claims. It is submitted that the amendments are fully supported, and entry is requested.

Formal Matters

For the record, there are no objections or rejections of the claims outstanding.

The Examiner's reminder regarding the amendment of the specification is gratefully acknowledged.

Rejections Under 35 USC 102/103

Claims 1, 3, 6-7, 11-13 and 15 stand rejected under §102 or §103 over EP 353976, for reasons of record at pages 2-3 of the Office Action.

Likewise, Claims 1, 3, 11-13 and 15 stand rejected over U.S. 4,783,281; Claims 1, 3, 6-7, and 11-15 stand rejected over U.S. 4,923,628; and Claims 1, 3-7 and 11-15 stand rejected over U.S., 6,069,124, all under §103 for reasons of record at page 3 of the Office Action.

Applicants respectfully traverse all such rejections, to the extent they may apply to the claims as now amended.

For the record, the arguments previously presented in support of patentability continue to apply to the process claims herein, but will not be repeated, for the sake of brevity.

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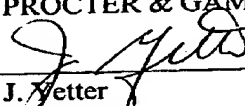
Col. 8, lines 57-67, would simply appear to be a conventional mixing of the granulate and the spray-dried adjunct, with no suggestion of any coating (much less crevice-filling) taking place. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections on this basis are therefore requested.

In light of the foregoing, early and favorable action on the amended claims is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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At the outset, it is noted that the process herein applies the coating material in aqueous or slurry form, followed by a drying step which provides the final, dried coating. As can be readily understood, applying the coating in this manner ensures good penetration of the liquefied coating material into the irregularities and crevices of the particle core, thereby providing the desired reduction in surface area after drying.

EP '976 simply dry-blends the base materials and then applies silicate or alkali. No use of sulfate/carbonate mixtures is suggested. Moreover, EP '976 specifically admits the use of silicate, which is avoided in the coatings herein. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections on this basis are requested.

U.S. '281 teaches post-dosage of sodium bicarbonate onto spray-dried detergent powder. (Abstract) Alternatively, the bicarbonate can be added via the spray-dry slurry; or both means (apparently) can be used. On the other hand, too much bicarbonate causes the desired cohesiveness and caking properties "to deteriorate again" – see Col. 4, lines 58-59.

Nothing in '281 teaches or suggests the replacement of bicarbonate with the sulfate/carbonate mixtures herein. Moreover, nothing therein suggests their application in the aqueous/slurry form/drying step to achieve a decrease in surface area in the present manner. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections on this basis are therefore requested.

U.S. '628 does teach post-dosing of solid material, including sodium sulphate, onto granular detergent compositions. (Abstract) Column 5, line 46, teaches "relatively fine" post-dosing material, i.e., clearly a solid, rather than the liquid/slurry/drying step used herein to ensure penetration of the crevices, thereby achieving the desired decrease in surface area. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection on this basis are requested.

U.S. '124 does disclose Burkeite as a post-dosage material ("adjunct"). However, the adjunct is specified as being spray dried (Col. 2, line 54). Moreover, the spray dried adjunct is taught to be an essential element that is postdosed. (Col. 9, lines 5-8.)

It is submitted that the post-dosing of the spray-dried adjunct in '124 does not imply providing a coating that partially fills the crevices of the base granules, thereby reducing surface area in the manner of the present invention. Indeed, the disclosure at